

# Five minutes with Georgios Markopouliotis, Head of European Commission Representation in Cyprus – “We need to communicate more and in a smarter, simpler way“

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*The recently appointed head of the European Commission Representation in Cyprus, [Georgios Markopouliotis](#), shares his thoughts with EUOPP on how to restore trust in the EU, the future of the Euro, and the EU's policy challenges in Cyprus in the coming years.*



**Cyprus will take over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union this year. Is this the best time to appoint a new Head of the European Commission Representation in Nicosia?**

People may come and go, but, of course, the Commission, as all other major institutions, maintains continuity. In any event, the staff in the Representation have been in place for some time and are all ready and able to deliver what will be required of us during the Presidency. The added value I bring at this stage is the actual experience of running a Representation in a Member State at a time that this country had the Presidency; I was the Head of the Athens Representation between 2001 and 2006 and was there at the time of the Greek Presidency in the first six months of 2003 – it was, as you will recall, an eventful Presidency, not least because of the Iraq war, but also a successful one, I think, as it achieved significant progress in many areas and especially enlargement, with 10 new Member States joining in the following year.

Finally, it is important, in my view, to remember that it is not the Representation that will be conducting the Presidency. This is a Cypriot Presidency that will be conducted by Cypriots. The Commission, as a whole, and, of course, the Representation are ready to offer support as requested.

**Will the European Commission Representation take a stance in the territorial dispute between Turkey and Cyprus?**

As you will recall, the conclusions of the European Council of December 9th, 2011 referred to Turkish statements and threats. The Council at the time expressed serious concern and called for full respect for the role of the Presidency of the Council that Cyprus will assume on July 1st. The Council noted then that the Presidency is a fundamental institutional feature of the EU provided for in the Treaty.

**Your predecessor [Androulla Kaminara](#) named migration and corruption as the main themes of her term in Nicosia. What will be the main themes of your term?**

We are currently very focused on economic issues – in particular, the new structures for economic governance and the [Multiannual Financial Framework](#), that is, the Union's budget for 2014-2020 – and we will be doing our utmost to inform Cypriot citizens about these issues and how they affect their daily lives. Not surprisingly, perhaps, we anticipate that these issues will also be amongst the top priorities of the Cyprus Presidency.

Another issue that we expect will figure high on the Presidency priorities is that of the Common

European Asylum Policy. Asylum and migration are issues that affect Cyprus directly and in the communication agenda of the Representation they will continue to receive due prominence.

In the medium-to-long term – after the Presidency – I think that our focus will continue to be guided by the [Europe 2020](#) strategy for smart, sustainable and socially inclusive growth.

**According to [a recent Eurobarometer](#), the most trusted institution in Cyprus is the army. What will you do to foster trust in the European Union?**

Trust in the European Union has fallen in recent years in almost all Member States – this is the reality we must address and the starting point for any such discussion. In 2009, and the Eurobarometer you refer to comes from that year, trust in the European Union across the EU 27 stood at 48%, while in 2011 it has dropped to 34%. The picture is somewhat more upbeat in Cyprus where, in 2011, 47% said they trusted the European Union. Nonetheless, here too there has been a drop from the figure of 59% recorded in 2009 in response to the same question and there is, clearly, no room for complacency.

Equally clearly, there is no magic wand that I or anyone else can wave and make the figures shoot up. All we can do is try even harder to communicate with the citizens and show them that the Union is working for them, to help boost growth and create jobs and protect their rights as European citizens. And we need to communicate not just more, but also in a smarter way, in simpler, relevant language and through the channels that people actually use to get their information – which, increasingly, means online channels. The Commission as a whole and the Representation in Nicosia are very much aware of this need.

**Cyprus adopted the Euro in January 2008 – almost five years ago. Do you think the Euro will be still with us in 5 years' time?**

Yes. The Euro has been severely tested over the last couple of years and we are not out of the woods just yet. But the Euro has shown itself to be resilient. What's more, it's true that the crisis has exposed a number of systemic faults but the Eurozone countries, and the EU at large, have shown that they have the will, the nous and the capacity to address these faults and this is how we have implemented far reaching changes and put in place a new structure of economic governance. I dare say that the Euro has suffered the worse crisis it will ever suffer – and it looks like it has come through, so, yes, I do think it will still be around in 5 years' time. You know what they say – what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger...

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*Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of EUROPPE – European Politics and Policy, nor of the London School of Economics.*

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### **About the author**

**Georgios Markopoulitis** – *Head of European Commission Representation in Cyprus*

In March 2012, Georgios Markopoulitis was appointed as Head of the European Commission's Representation office in Cyprus. His career in the European Commission began in 1987, and since then he worked on EU Structural Policies, Economic and Monetary Union, Agriculture and Fisheries, Transport, Parliamentary Affairs, Research and Budget and Regional Policy. Between 2001 and 2006, he was the Head of the European Commission's Representation Office in Athens, Greece,



which covered the Greek Presidency of the EU in the first part of 2003.

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